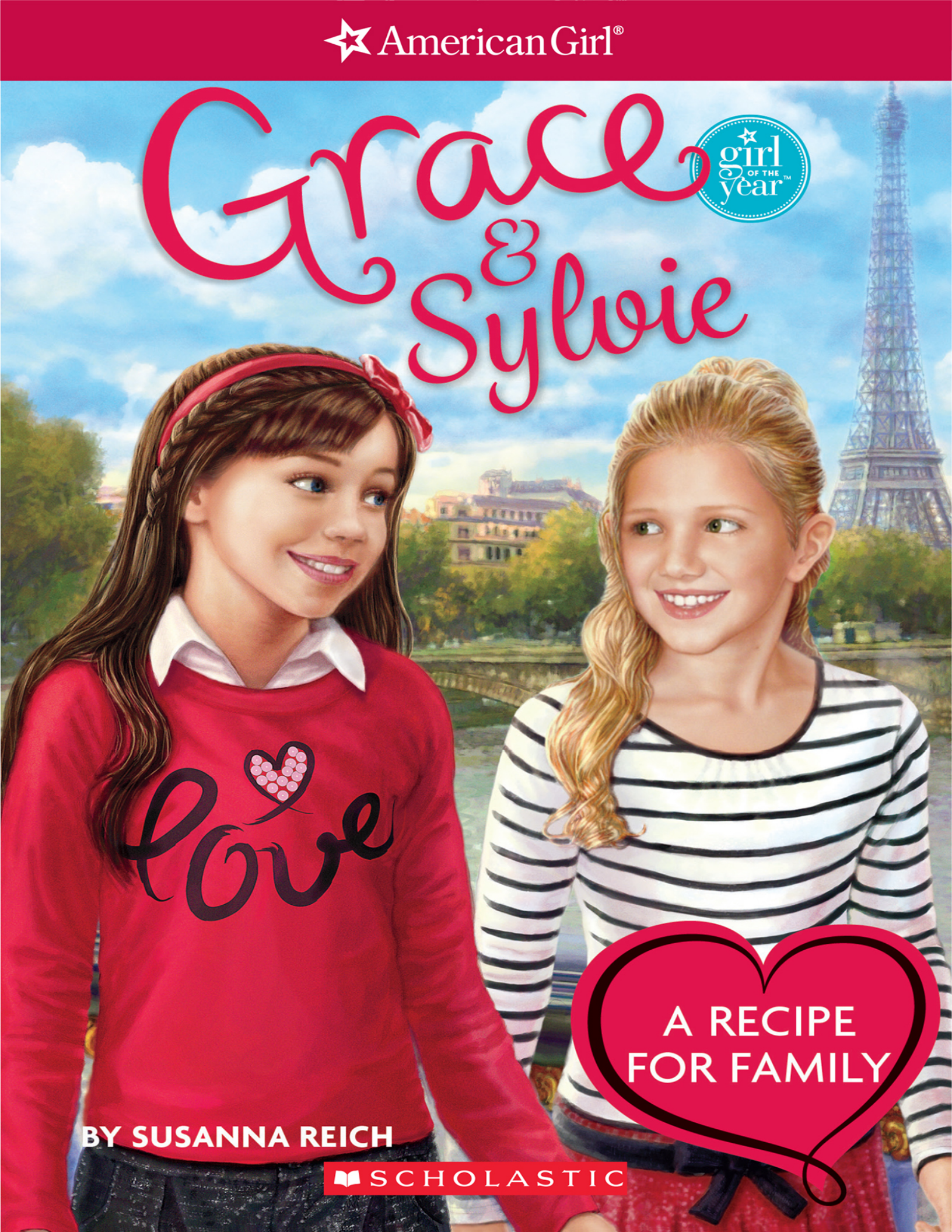
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A Surprising Turn of Events

Chapter 1

When I got home from school, I tossed my flowered backpack onto my bed and raced downstairs. More people than usual were lined up in front of our shop. June in Paris meant that the tourist season was in full swing, so *La Pâtisserie* was especially busy. Soon it would be summer vacation, and I'd be able to spend the whole day helping in the bakery. I'd have lots of time in the kitchen with Papa, and I'd get to decorate pastries, too. I couldn't wait!

I jumped the last two steps and bounced through the bakery door, ducking behind the counter and into the kitchen. "*Bonjour!*" I called, inhaling the wheaty scent of fresh-baked bread.

Papa, in his white baker's uniform, was loading trays of raw *croissants* into the proofing machine, where they would rise at just the right temperature. In one smooth, balletic motion, he whisked the trays from counter to shelf, his arms strong from years of kneading bread and lifting bags of flour.

"*Bonjour, mon petit rayon de soleil,*" he said, putting down a tray and kissing me on both cheeks. I loved it when he called me his little ray of sunshine. I gave him a squeeze.

"*Bonjour*, Sylvie," said Colette, Papa's summer intern. "Would you like to help?"

"*Oui!*" I said, reaching for my white apron.

Colette and I had been friends from the moment we met. She understood the importance of perfect pastries, and we liked to sing while we mixed and sifted and spooned. Today her dark brown hair was tied back, and she was wearing one of the flowered aprons that she sewed herself. She was working on a tray of *tartes*, carefully placing raspberries on each

individual pie. We finished them together, and Colette carried them out to the waiting customers. When she returned, she handed me a canister of powdered sugar.

"I saved some decorating for you," she said.

"*Merci*," I said, thanking her.

Two dozen of my favorite cupcake-sized chocolate treats had already cooled off on the counter—*chocolat au coeur coulant*. I took my time with the sugar, gently shaking the canister so as not to make a mess. Then I did some larger cakes, including a *gâteau à la rhubarbe*, the special rhubarb cake we make only in the spring (secret ingredient: yogurt!). I saved the almond sponge cake—*gâteau aux amandes*—for last. It's made from my grandmother's recipe, and seeing it made me think of Grand-mère and how much I've missed her since she passed away. Until a few months ago, she and I took long walks together every week. She could name all the different flowers in the Luxembourg Gardens, the common names *and* the Latin ones. She's the one who taught me how to plant roses and ivy in our apartment's window boxes.

At the kitchen counter, Colette worked next to me, but she didn't have to keep an eye on what I was doing. Sprinkling sugar is one of my special jobs. It's easy and fun, and I've been doing it forever. When I finished, I tackled a much harder task: using a pastry bag to pipe rosettes of *crème chantilly*—sweetened whipped cream—in between the cream puffs on top of a *St. Honoré* cake. Colette had taught me how, guiding my hand until my rosettes were perfectly even.

"Those look great," she said when I was done. "*Formidable*."

My cheeks grew warm, and I wasn't even near the oven. I glanced at Papa, eager to see if he'd noticed. He's usually proud of my work and tells me so. But he was giving directions to Emilie, Julien, and Sébastien, the other bakers, and I knew not to interrupt. I must have sighed out loud, because suddenly Colette's arm was around my shoulder.

"He has lots to do now that your *maman* isn't working in the afternoons," she said.

"I know," I shrugged. "It's okay." Still, I was disappointed. Lately Papa was so busy, and Maman was so tired! Everything was changing, and I didn't like it at all.

That evening, after I cleared the dishes from the table, Papa and Maman asked me to sit with them. Maman is actually my stepmother, but she's the only mother I've ever known. My real mother died when I was so young, I can't remember her at all. A few years ago Papa married Sophie, and she became my maman.

Tonight, Maman's chair was pushed way back from the table to make room for her belly. *Le bébé* would be here soon, I could tell. Napoléon, our golden tabby cat named after the French emperor, jumped onto my lap. I stroked him quietly.

"The doctor told Maman she must stay in bed until the baby comes," said Papa.

I turned to Maman. "Stay in bed? Are you sick?" I knew Maman had been tired, but this sounded serious.

"*Non*, everything is fine, Sylvie," she said. "I just need to stay off my feet. I can't work in the bakery anymore—not until after the baby is born."

My mind raced. We had lost Grand-mère just last month. What if something happened to Maman? What would Papa and I do without her? Then I had another thought. If Maman couldn't work in the bakery, Papa would be even busier. My stomach twisted.

"We've invited my sister—your Aunt Karen—to come from the United States to stay with us for five weeks," said Maman.

"She'll be bringing your cousin Grace," added Papa.

"Aunt Karen will help around the house, and you and Grace can get to know each other better," said Maman.

I felt like someone had turned me upside down. The plan had been for Grand-mère to help when the baby arrived. Now she was gone, and Aunt Karen and Cousin Grace were coming instead. I hardly knew them. I felt shy just thinking about it, and that made me miss Grand-mère even more. What else was going to change once *le bébé* was born?

I took a deep breath. I had to show Papa and Maman that they could count on me no matter what happened.

I sat up as tall as I could. "I can help, too," I said. "There's lots I can do."

"Of course there is," said Maman.

"Laundry. Cooking. I can shop. I could even…try to work the counter in the bakery."

Papa glanced at Maman. They both knew I never work the counter. I get tongue-tied just looking at strangers.

"For now," said Papa gently, "why don't you just help Maman here at home?"

"I can still work in the bakery, can't I?" I asked in alarm.

"Of course!" said Papa, looking at his watch. "You're our best sugar-sprinkler. And you're getting pretty good with the pastry bag, too." He leaned over and gave me a hug.

"*Merci*, Papa," I said, squeezing back.

Papa stood and kissed Maman on the forehead. "I'll be back soon," he said, heading for the stairs.

I wished Papa could watch television or play a game with me after dinner, like other fathers. But as usual he had to check on a batch of bread that was rising in the bakery. "I'll take good care of Maman, I promise," I called after him. Turning to her, I added, "Are you sure you're all right?"

"Yes. Don't worry."

"Okay," I said.

But I did worry.

That night I shut my yellow curtains and lay in bed, my mind running in circles. Was Maman really all right? What were Aunt Karen and Cousin Grace like? I'd met them only once, at Papa and Maman's wedding in Boston two years ago. Certainly it would be nice to have company during the summer, when most of my friends go away on family vacation. But how would I talk to Grace? She didn't know any French the first time we met. Did she know any now? What if we can't talk at all? My English isn't very good, and I feel funny speaking it outside of school. Maman and I sometimes speak English at home so I can practice. She's very patient with my mistakes—and I make a lot of them. But English isn't my best subject. What if Grace thinks I'm not very smart?

I whispered my worries to Napoléon, who cuddled closer. “I miss Grand-mère,” I told him, scratching his soft belly. He began to purr.

Even with the curtains closed, there was light in the room. Paris is so far north that at this time of year the sun sets late, and it’s not completely dark until eleven. I could see the pictures of flowers I’d been taping to the walls since Grand-mère died. Daffodils, roses, tulips, and lilies smiled down at me.

The cat stretched and curled up behind my knees. “You’re *une crème*, Napoléon,” I said. You don’t care if I’m shy or my English is terrible. You always understand how I feel.”

He blinked his cool green eyes. I began to sing Grand-mère’s favorite lullaby, the one she used to sing to me when I was a baby:

Fais dodo, Sylvie ma petite,
Fais dodo, t’auras du lolo.
Maman est en haut,
Qui fait des gâteaux.
Papa est en bas,
Qui fait du chocolat.

Go to sleep, Sylvie my little one,
Go to sleep, you will have your milk.
Mama is upstairs,
making some cakes.
Papa is downstairs,
making chocolate.

The song that used to comfort me now made me sad. I stroked Napoléon’s velvety ears. Grand-mère was gone, and the new baby would be here soon. The American relatives I barely knew were coming to stay. It was all so confusing, and I didn’t have a recipe to fix it.

The Right Words

Chapter 2

The night before Aunt Karen and Cousin Grace arrived, I emptied the bottom drawer of my dresser and cleaned out my closet to make room for their things. Like most Paris apartments, ours is very small. It was going to be a tight squeeze with a new baby, and now there would be two more people.

I took a bunch of clothes I'd outgrown and made a pile to donate to *La Croix Rouge*, the Red Cross. Even if *le bébé* was a girl, we had no place to store hand-me-downs. As I worked, I hummed along to the classical music that Maman had put on in the living room.

As promised, I'd been helping Maman with chores around the house. I'd thought "bed rest" meant that she wouldn't get out of bed at all, not even to take a shower. I figured she'd be really dirty by the time the baby was born! It turned out she could get up once in a while, as long as she didn't do anything too strenuous.

In the back of the closet there was a doll-sized pocketbook with a broken clasp, a crushed hat from a long-ago birthday party, and a paper fan with a hole in it. I dumped them in the garbage. It felt good to get rid of old stuff. I also found a daisy-shaped key ring that Grand-mère had given me. I rubbed it for good luck and put it on my desk, where it could remind me of Grand-mère.

The next morning I woke up early, too nervous to sleep. Papa had been in the bakery for hours already, making sure everything was ready for the morning rush. Customers often stopped on their way to work to buy an

espresso coffee and a *croissant* or a *pain au chocolat*, a flaky pastry filled with chocolate. Then they'd sit at the small round tables inside and outside the bakery and read the newspaper, or just watch people walking by, many with their little dogs.

By the time I'd finished breakfast—a glass of milk and a buttery *brioche* roll with homemade apricot jam—I was bursting with excitement.

"When will they be here?" I asked Maman for the millionth time. "Can I get you anything? I cleaned out my closet. Will they be hungry when they arrive? Do you think Grace will have a cell phone?" I'd wanted a cell phone for so long, but not many kids in France have them.

Maman laughed at my rush of questions. "I'm excited, too." she said. "I can't wait to see my sister. I really miss her."

Maman and Aunt Karen had grown up in a small town in Massachusetts, where their parents owned a bakery. Then Maman came to Paris to study pastry making and met Papa. The rest, as they say, is *de l'histoire*. History.

"Is Aunt Karen sorry she played 'school' with you when you were kids?" I asked.

Maman looked at me, curious. "Why would she be sorry?"

"Because you were the student and she was the teacher, and she taught you so much about France that when you grew up, you moved here. Far away from your family."

Maman chuckled. "No, she's not sorry. We loved playing school. Besides, it was good practice—she's a teacher now, after all. And my being here gives her an excuse to visit Paris."

"Why would she need an excuse?" I said. "We have the best pastries!"

Maman laughed. Then she looked thoughtful. "You know, I always looked up to Aunt Karen because she was my big sister."

"It's hard to picture you as a little kid," I said.

"Our new baby will look up to you. You're going to be a wonderful big sister."

"Do you really think so?" I said. "What if I can't figure out how?"

"It'll come naturally. You'll see." Maman didn't seem worried, but I was.

Maman looked at her watch. "The plane lands soon, but it'll be a while before they get here. Remember when we flew to the States for the

wedding? First Karen and Grace have to wait for their luggage, and then they have to go through customs to have their passports stamped. They'll take a taxi from the airport, but you know how bad the traffic can be."

I nodded. I know all about traffic. We live in the sixth *arrondissement*—one of the twenty districts of Paris. Our street near St. Sulpice Church is fairly quiet, but I've seen cars on the main boulevards backed up for blocks.

I was jumpy, so Maman gave me a new magazine, and I busied myself cutting out more pictures of flowers to decorate my bedroom. When the phone rang, I leaped up. "Sylvie!" called Maman. "That was Colette calling from the shop! They're here!"

I flung down the magazine and flew to the top of the stairs. Aunt Karen and Grace were standing at the bottom, smiling up at us. Grace looked the same as at the wedding, only taller. She's nine—a year older than me. She wore her dark-brown hair long, with bangs pushed to one side. Seeing her, my stomach fluttered with excitement. Or was it nervousness? I couldn't tell. Would I have to speak English now?

"*Bonjour! Bienvenue à Paris!* Welcome to Paris!" Papa said, coming through the bakery door and slapping flour off his hands. He carried up their suitcases and exchanged kisses on both cheeks with Grace and Aunt Karen, as French people do. I felt suddenly shy, but made myself step forward to kiss Aunt Karen. I kissed Grace, too, though I think she felt as awkward as I did, because she bumped her head into my nose. Too late, I remembered that Americans don't kiss on both cheeks.

Maman came to the doorway and kissed Grace. Then she held out her arms to Aunt Karen, and they gave each other a giant hug.

"Sophie, you look ready to burst," said Aunt Karen, looking at Maman's belly.

"You may be the big sister, but I'm the bigger sister," joked Maman.

Aunt Karen laughed and put an arm around Maman's shoulder. "I'm so glad we're here," she said.

"Me, too," said Maman.

After the adults made a fuss about how much Grace and I had grown, I fetched the small bouquet of roses that I'd picked from my window box for Aunt Karen.

"How lovely!" said Aunt Karen. "*Merci*, Sylvie."

"Sylvie grew them herself," Maman said in English, speaking slowly so that I could try to follow the conversation.

I handed Grace a little blue bag with *La Pâtisserie* printed on the side. I'd packed the bag carefully with *macarons* and a mini *tarte* that I'd decorated.

"Thank you," said Grace, peeking inside. "Wow, these pastries are really beautiful!"

I blushed. "*Je t'en prie*."

Papa leaned down. "Here's a chance to practice your English," he said to me in French.

I thought a moment. "You're welcome," I said in English, looking at my shoes. He was right, but it felt strange to speak English outside of school with anyone other than Maman.

We gave Aunt Karen and Grace a tour of the apartment, which didn't take long. Then I took Grace to my room, pulled out the extra mattress from under the bed, and showed her the closet and dresser.

She looked around. "Thank you. *Merci,*" she said, followed by a rush of English.

Had she said something about my room? Had I left enough space for her clothes? I had no idea.

When I didn't answer, Grace started to unpack, carefully unfolding and refolding her clothes and placing them in the dresser in neat little piles. I tried to think of something to say, but the English flew out of my head. My shoulders drooped as I realized that getting to know Grace was going to be hard. She didn't seem to know much French. And what if she laughed when I tried to speak English?

Unsure of what to do, I sat on my bed and cut out a picture of yellow tulips from a magazine. Grace unpacked slowly, so I glued the picture to some red construction paper and taped it to the wall. Maman came in to say hello, speaking to Grace in English. I couldn't make heads or tails out of what she said. Napoléon came in to say hello, too. He pretended not to look at Grace, but I could tell he was keeping an eye on her. When she tried to pet him, he ran away.

I was glad when Papa came back up from the bakery at lunchtime. I'd prepared most of the meal yesterday while Maman sat at the kitchen table, her feet propped on a chair: roast chicken, cold asparagus wrapped in strips

of carrot, and potatoes. There was plenty of Papa's bread too, of course—a couple of long, thin *baguettes* with soft centers and perfect, crisp crusts. We finished with two cow cheeses, a *chèvre*, or goat cheese, and some stewed apples. Grace shook her head when Maman offered her one of the sharp-smelling cheeses. Grace said "stinky" and wrinkled her nose. I giggled. "Stinky" was a funny-sounding word. "What does it mean, Papa?" I whispered as Maman handed me the plate.

"Smelly," Papa whispered back. "Grace thinks the cheese smells bad."

I shook my head and took a big helping. I love cheese—even the stinky kind!

I'd been trying to follow the conversation, which was mostly in English, but it was hard to understand. Everyone talked so fast—and sometimes all at once! I *could* tell that they all enjoyed the food, and that made me happy. When we were nearly finished, Papa said something to Aunt Karen and Cousin Grace and then translated for me.

"Sylvie made this meal. She is a really good cook and an excellent baker. Decorating pastries is her specialty. She works with me in the bakery."

Everyone was looking at me. "*Merci,*" I muttered, my cheeks on fire. Aunt Karen and Grace smiled, and Maman nodded encouragingly, but I couldn't think of a word to say in English.

There was an embarrassing silence, and then Aunt Karen asked Maman a question. The English conversation took over again, and suddenly I felt left out. Would the next five weeks be like this? Would I ever be able to talk to my American family?

Something in Common

Chapter 3

After lunch, at Maman's suggestion, Grace and I made our way toward *les jardins du Luxembourg*, the Luxembourg Gardens. I was too nervous to speak English, so we walked in silence. I felt awkward, but Grace didn't seem to notice. She was busy taking in the neighborhood—the fancy brass knockers on the brightly painted doors, the blue-and-white house numbers, the wrought-iron balconies.

As we passed my elementary school, I pointed to the yellow brick building. "*Mon école,*" I said. "My school."

The French national motto was written above the entrance door: *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité*. Freedom, Equality, Brotherhood. I'd learned in school that both France and the United States believed in freedom and equality. As for brotherhood, Grace had a fourteen-year-old brother named Josh, but so far I had neither brothers nor sisters. I'd have one soon enough, though.

I paused to think about this. Would the baby be a boy or a girl? Either way, Maman and Papa would certainly be giving it lots of attention. I felt a pang of worry again, wondering how I'd fit into this new family.

I realized Grace was standing there, staring at me.

"*Liberté, Egalité, Cousinage!*" I said to her in French. I was trying to make a joke by saying "Cousinhood" instead of "Brotherhood." But Grace just tilted her head, confused, and said something in English that I didn't understand. Oh, dear. How would we ever have Cousinhood if we couldn't even talk to each other?

At the Luxembourg Gardens there were pigeons everywhere, as usual. I'd saved a leftover piece of bread from lunch. I pulled it out of my pocket and threw the birds some crumbs.

"*Parlez-vous anglais*, Sylvie?" Grace said. "Do you speak English?"

I hesitated. If I said yes, she'd expect me to be able to have a conversation. "*Non,*" I said uneasily, keeping my eyes on the pigeons.

Grace's smile faded. I felt awful. After a long, embarrassing pause, Grace took out a cell phone and started snapping pictures of the pigeons.

Click!

Wow! I wished I could ask her to show me how the phone worked. What else could she do with it besides taking pictures? Go online? Send e-mail? Instead, I motioned for her to follow me as I sped through the park. She took pictures of everything: the playground, the puppet theater, the carousel, the pony rides. Without better English, I couldn't tell her about any of it.

By the time we reached the far end of the park, the silence between us was making me squirm inside. Grace must've been bored, because she kept yawning. Just then we came upon a small black-and-white dog, a friendly stray I'd seen before and sometimes fed. She had short legs, soft black eyes, and a smushed nose. She was thin and dirty, and I felt sorry for her.

"*Bonjour, petite chienne!*" I said, greeting the little dog. I clapped my hands, and she came to me. I scratched her behind the ears and told her what a good girl she was. Her tail wagged furiously.

Grace's eyes lit up. She said something in English and snapped another picture. Then she bent down and looked for a collar, but there wasn't one. "She's so sweet," she said.

"*Oui,*" I said. I knew the word "sweet" because I'd heard English-speaking tourists use it in the pastry shop.

Grace patted the dog's head, ruffling her fur. I placed my last bit of bread on the ground, and the dog snatched it and ran off.

"*Au revoir, petite chienne!*" I said as we walked away.

Grace pulled out a pocket dictionary. She looked through it but didn't say anything. Leaving the park, she kept glancing back toward the dog. I realized that while we couldn't speak each other's languages, we did have one thing in common—we both liked animals.

When we got back to the apartment, Grace was looking pretty droopy. We found Maman and Aunt Karen in Maman's bedroom. Maman was on the bed with her feet up, surrounded by a sea of pillows. Grace said something to her mother, then went to my room.

"I don't think Grace is feeling well," I said.

Aunt Karen said something in English.

"She'll feel better after a nap," said Maman, translating. "It's the jet lag."

I remembered how exhausted I was when we flew to Boston for Papa and Maman's wedding. Suddenly I felt bad for dragging Grace all over the park.

Aunt Karen said something else, and Maman answered. They both laughed.

I looked at Maman. "What did she say?" I asked, a bit impatiently.

"She said she's sleepy too and wishes she could lie down on the bed," Maman answered. "But there's no room. With all those pillows, I look like Queen Marie Antoinette. I told her, 'In that case you must do my every bidding.'"

It was great to see Maman joking with her big sister. I wondered whether Grace and I would ever be able to laugh together like that.

"Oh, the baby is kicking!" said Maman. "Sylvie, would you like to feel it?"

"*Oui!*" I said.

She placed my hand on her tummy.

"Karen, *toi aussi,*" said Maman, reaching for her sister's hand.

Together we held our hands on Maman and waited for the kick.

"*Je l'ai senti!*" I said, and at the same moment Aunt Karen said, "I felt it!"

Maman said something to Aunt Karen.

"Maman, in French. *Please*. I can't understand when you talk so fast." It was so frustrating not to be able to follow a conversation with my own family!

"I told her it's great to have her here," said Maman. "That I haven't been able to do anything around the house and that I don't know what I would've done without you, Sylvie."

Aunt Karen smiled at me. I felt a blush of happiness.

"Grace took a lot of pictures in the park," I blurted. "I hope she likes it here."

Aunt Karen said something in English, and Maman translated. "Aunt Karen says Grace is excited to be here," Maman explained. "She's been making lists of all the things she wants to see."

I'd been looking forward to showing Grace around Paris, but now I wasn't sure either of us would want to spend another awkward afternoon together. "How will we talk to each other?" I said.

"You know more English than you realize," said Maman. "The more you speak, the easier it will get. Don't be timid. Just take the plunge."

"Are you sure Grace won't make fun of me?" I said.

"Of course not, sweetie. Speaking French feels just as strange to her as speaking English does to you."

I hadn't thought of that. Maman was right. I vowed to take the plunge, even if it felt like jumping into a cold lake.

For now, I just wanted to be somewhere I felt confident. "May I go help Papa in the bakery?"

"*Mais oui,*" said Maman. "Of course."

"*Merci,*" I said.

As I walked through the living room, Napoléon rubbed against my legs. I reached down to pet him.

"Oh, Napoléon," I said. "I wish I'd paid more attention in English class!"

Little Baby, Big Change

Chapter 4

Sylvie!" Papa whispered. "Wake up!"

My eyes popped open. Papa was standing over me, his face flushed. I glanced over at Grace. Still asleep. She and Aunt Karen had been here a week.

"What's the matter?" I asked in alarm.

"Shhh! Don't wake Grace. Maman had the baby!"

I leaped out of bed, nearly knocking over the clock. The green numbers glowed in the early morning light. Six a.m.

"When?" The baby wasn't supposed to be here until mid-July. "Boy or girl? Is the baby okay? Is Maman?"

"A few hours ago. A girl. They're both fine. Do you want to come to the hospital to see them?"

"*Mais oui!*"

Papa left the room, and I threw on a skirt and blouse. The baby's here! And it's a girl! I felt tingly all over. Thrilled, but also nervous. What was it going to be like to have a sister?

We slipped out onto the quiet street. It was so early that the bakery was still closed. I knew that Colette, Julien, and Emilie were in the kitchen, getting ready to open, but the front of the shop was dark.

It usually takes twenty minutes to walk to the hospital, but Papa and I flew down the sidewalk and got there in fifteen. The receptionist waved us in, and we took the stairs two at a time.

"This way," Papa said when we got to the third floor. "No running. Walk." He steered me to Maman's room.

There was Maman sitting in the bed, grinning down at the tiniest baby I'd ever seen. *Le bébé* was wrapped tight in a blanket, looking like a sausage in a *baguette*.

I tiptoed to the bed. Maman leaned over and gave me a kiss.

"Good morning, sweetie. Meet your sister." Maman turned the baby to face me. She had Papa's dark hair and Papa's chin.

"What's her name?" I asked softly.

"Lilou," said Maman. "We'll call her 'Lily' for short."

"Oh, that's so pretty," I said. "Like a flower." I thought of Grand-mère and felt a flutter in my chest. The baby was amazing, but I missed my grandmother. How strange to feel happy and sad at the same time.

Maman smiled, and Papa put his arm around me. We all looked at the baby, and for a while, no one said anything.

"Why is her face all scrunched up and red?" I finally asked.

Maman laughed. "That's what newborns look like."

"You looked just like that when you were born," Papa added.

My eyes widened. "I did? I was that wrinkled?"

"*Oui, ma chérie,*" he said. "But you were perfect. And so is Lily."

I looked at Maman and Papa and felt my lip begin to tremble.

"Sylvie, what's the matter?" said Maman.

"I don't know how to be a sister," I said, the words catching in my throat. "What if I'm no good at it?"

"You will be," said Maman.

"Of course you will," said Papa.

"But how do you know?" I said. "I'm not even good at being a cousin."

"Yes, you are," Papa insisted. "And you'll get the hang of being a sister. You're good at learning new things."

He sounded confident, but I didn't feel that way. A big sister should be sure of herself. I just felt small and overwhelmed.

Papa took me home, checked on the bakery, and then returned to the hospital to be with Maman and Lily. I was exhausted from all the

excitement and didn't know what to do with myself. In the afternoon, when Aunt Karen and Grace went to meet the baby, I decided to stay home.

The house was quiet, just Napoléon and me. I went downstairs and poked my head into the bakery. Colette was behind the counter, wearing one of her pretty aprons. "Congratulations, Sylvie! A girl!" she said.

"*Oui,*" I said.

"I can't wait to meet her. Does she look like your mother or your father?"

"Like Papa," I said, without much enthusiasm.

"Do you want to give us some help in the back? We're making *tarte Tatin*."

Normally I like helping with apple upside-down cake, but not today. Nothing about today was normal. "*Non, merci*. I think I'll stay in the apartment."

I trudged up the stairs. Sunlight was streaming through the living room window, but it didn't cheer me up. Rather, it made me think of how Papa called me his "ray of sunshine." Would he still do that, now that the baby was here?

Napoléon wound himself around my legs. I picked him up, snuggled him against my shoulder, and turned on the television. There was nothing interesting, just some stupid cartoons. I must've fallen asleep, because the next thing I knew, there were cooking noises in the kitchen. Aunt Karen and Grace were clomping around, talking in English a mile a minute. They were probably gushing about the baby, but the conversation was so fast that I couldn't follow it.

I buried my face in a pillow. I missed Maman and Papa. I wished Grand-mère were here. The new baby wasn't even home yet, and already everything was different.

The next morning as Papa was leaving for the bakery, he told me that Aunt Karen wanted to buy some flowers for Maman before she and Grace went to the hospital.

"Please help them, Sylvie," he said, dashing off.

I took them to my favorite flower shop in the neighborhood. The sidewalk in front was covered with buckets full of red poppies, yellow daisies, pink sweet peas, orange lilies, and all kinds of roses. Inside the shop, a woman with the world's tiniest scissors was clipping a dead flower off an orchid plant.

"*Bonjour, madame,*" she said to Aunt Karen. "*Puis-je vous aider?*"

The woman had said, "How can I help you?" but Aunt Karen didn't understand. "*Parlez-vous anglais?*" Aunt Karen asked.

"*Non*, madame."

"Oh, dear," said Aunt Karen. "I would like…" Aunt Karen started in English. Then she shook her head and tried French. "*Je voudrais*…*Je voudrais*…" She fell silent. I realized she didn't know how to buy flowers in French. It had never occurred to me that a grown-up could have trouble with a foreign language, just like me. And Aunt Karen was a teacher!

"*Une minute,*" said Grace, whipping out her French dictionary. She flipped through the pages, looking for the right words.

I didn't know much English, but I did know flowers. I stepped forward and told the woman that we'd like to buy a bouquet. I explained to her which flowers Maman liked and asked if she had them in the shop.

"Ah, *oui!*" she replied, asking Maman's favorite color.

"*Pourpre,*" I replied.

Grace looked up from her book. "Purple?" she said.

"*Oui*. Purple," I said. The word felt funny on my tongue.

"Oh, perfect!" said Aunt Karen.

I picked out pink, white, and purple roses and some sweet-smelling freesia. The florist clipped the bottoms and arranged them in a swirling bouquet, turning it as she added each stem and tucking in some lavender at the end.

"*Parfum supplémentaire,*" she said.

It took a few minutes for Grace to look up the words in her dictionary. "Extra fragrance," she finally declared.

The florist filled a clear plastic sleeve with water and tied the flowers into it with a purple ribbon.

When it was time to pay, I helped Aunt Karen pick out the correct *euro* bills and coins from her purse. She wasn't used to our European money.

"Sylvie, thank you," said Aunt Karen as we left the shop.

“You’re welcome,” I said shyly in English.

On the way home, I felt like skipping. I had been able to help, and Maman’s bouquet was beautiful.

But then Grace put a hand on my arm and said something quickly in English. Suddenly I didn’t feel like skipping anymore.

“I am sorry, I do not understand,” I said carefully in English, wishing I had a *bonbon au chocolat* for every time I’d said that lately. If only talking to Grace were as easy as combining flowers into a bouquet!

Calamity in the Kitchen

Chapter 5

When Lily came home from the hospital she slept all day, snorting and gurgling and making little burpy noises. The second morning, she was awake when I finished breakfast, and Maman said Grace and I could visit with her.

I leaned over the bassinet and looked into Lily's big brown eyes. She stared right back, unblinking.

"*Bonjour, mon petit chou,*" I said, stroking her baby-soft cheek. Grand-mère used to call me her "little cabbage" when I was young. It suited Lily, too, I thought.

Grace peered into the bassinet. "*Bonjour…mon petit…chou,*" she said slowly. Then she added, "And welcome to the world!"

I glanced at Grace, then at Lily. "Welcome to the world," I repeated to myself. But I didn't have the nerve to say it out loud.

Grace smiled. "She's so small," she said, holding her thumb and index finger close together in the air.

Small. I knew that word. "*Oui,*" I said, nodding.

I made some kissy noises at Lily, and so did Grace. We both started cooing and saying nonsense words in high, squeaky voices. Baby talk must be a language everyone knows—it was the most Grace and I had spoken to each other since she arrived. I held out a finger to Lily, and she grasped it with her tiny hand. Maybe being a big sister wouldn't be so hard after all.

But as the week went on, I began to feel more and more left out. Maman and Aunt Karen were always busy with Lily—feeding her, burping her, changing her, rocking her, and bathing her. Babies sure need a lot of attention! And once Lily discovered her lungs, I was shocked that someone

so tiny could make such a big sound. Grace and I had to sleep with pillows over our ears.

School had ended, so I was able to spend more time in the bakery. At least I could be close to Papa. He was grateful for my help, even if he didn't have time to talk to me. I kept out of his way and assisted Colette. Meanwhile Papa bustled between the bakery and the bassinet, looking rumpled and tired because he was often up in the middle of the night with Maman and Lily. I felt invisible, especially when Maman didn't remember to translate her conversations with Aunt Karen and Grace. I never knew you could be so lonely in a house full of people.

One afternoon, Maman called me into her room. Lily was asleep in her bassinet.

"How are you and Grace getting along?" Maman asked.

"Okay, I guess," I said. She patted the bed, and I sat down next to her.

"Are you understanding each other any better?"

"It's still hard to talk," I admitted. "But I'm trying."

She smiled. "It'll get easier. My French wasn't very good before I met your papa."

"Really? But your French is so good now!"

"*Merci,*" she said. "But I had to work at it."

I looked at her in surprise.

"Anyway," she continued, "I wanted to tell you that Grace is feeling a bit homesick now that Aunt Karen is so busy helping me with the baby."

"I feel homesick, too," I said. "And I haven't even gone anywhere."

"Oh, sweetie. Change is hard for everyone. You miss Grand-mère, and you're still getting used to having a new baby sister. Grace is still getting used to Paris, and she misses her family and friends."

It hadn't occurred to me that Grace and I had so much in common. I wished there was something I could do to cheer her up. If only I weren't so afraid of getting the words wrong! Sometimes when I tried to speak English, my brain felt just like scrambled eggs.

That night at supper, we were finishing our dessert of *crème caramel* custard when Grace asked Papa a question.

Papa turned to me and translated. "At home, Grace helps Grandma and Grandpa in their bakery. She would like to help at *La Pâtisserie*."

My breath caught. The bakery was my special place to be with Papa. Then I thought about what Maman had said about Grace being homesick. Would helping at *La Pâtisserie* make her feel better?

Before I could say anything, Papa turned back to Grace. "I don't know," he said, looking doubtful. "We're very busy right now, so I don't have time to show you around and explain how things work."

When Papa told me what he'd said to Grace, I put down my spoon. This was my chance to speak up. "Papa, *s'il te plaît?*" I said. "Please? I will help Grace."

Papa looked from me to Grace, and then at Maman. Maman nodded her head. "*D'accord,*" said Papa. "Okay. But Grace, you'll have to stay close to Sylvie and to Colette, our intern."

Grace lit up the whole table with her smile. "Thank you, Uncle Bernard!" she said. Then she turned to me. "*Merci*, Sylvie!" she added enthusiastically.

She looked so happy, I couldn't help but smile, too.

The next day Grace came to the bakery after the morning rush. Colette and I were finishing the *Mont Blanc* pastries. Named after the highest mountain in the Alps, they're made of egg-white *meringues* topped with chestnut squiggles and whipped cream. Yum! Colette was using a pastry bag to pipe the chestnut purée onto the "mountain," and then I was spooning on the whipped cream "snow."

When the *Mont Blancs* were ready, Colette and I showed Grace around the kitchen. In a mix of French and English, Colette explained each tool, machine, and device—the burner with its pot of apricot syrup to glaze the *tartes*, the shelves to cool the cakes, the decorating station, the ovens, even the supply of flour scoops, rolling pins, whisks, pastry brushes, and spatulas. We tiptoed around Emilie, Julien, and Sébastien. Grace oohed and

aahed over the layers of puff pastry and the delicate icing designs on the *millefeuille*.

I moved over to a tray of *tartes* and began placing small strawberries point-side-up on each one. Grace watched me closely, and I smiled at her. I recognized the look of concentration on her face—it was the look of someone who loved to bake, just like me. Meanwhile, Colette was whisking eggs in a big copper bowl. Then she went through the swinging door to the front of the shop.

I was focusing on my strawberries, or I might have noticed that Grace had picked up a broom and was sweeping flour and dust into a pile. As Colette stepped through the kitchen door, a delivery person opened the back door—and *whoosh!* Grace's sweepings suddenly flew into the air and, just as suddenly, settled back down, all over the mixing bowls full of cream and the cooling cakes.

"*Non, non!*" Papa scolded.

Grace froze. My mouth dropped open. Colette grabbed the broom. We never sweep while we're baking. That's a job for the end of the day. I should have explained that to Grace! This was all my fault. I'd promised to help Grace, but I got distracted. If only I'd been paying attention to what she was doing! Now there was extra work for everyone, and I could tell Grace felt terrible.

"*C'est dommage,*" said Papa, shaking his head. "Too bad. Let's start over."

Grace looked like she might cry. Colette pointed to the dirty pans and bowls in the sink on the other side of the kitchen and asked her to wash the dishes. Grace started scrubbing a pan so hard, I thought she'd scrub right through it. I felt sorry for her and wished I could make her feel better, but I was too shy to say something in English.

"Sylvie, *tout de suite*," said Papa. "We need those strawberry *tartes* up front right away."

"*Oui*, Papa," I said. I turned away from Grace and went back to work on the *tartes*.

A little while later, Aunt Karen came into the kitchen.

"Grace?" she said. All our heads turned to her at once.

"*Elle est sortie,*" said Colette. "She went outside."

Aunt Karen seemed confused. "But…she's not…out front. Or upstairs."

I was holding a strawberry in mid-air. I put it down.
“Bernard?” Aunt Karen said to Papa.
“Sylvie. Colette. *Cherchez* Grace,” said Papa. “Find Grace.”

Lost!

Chapter 6

Colette and I pulled off our aprons and dashed out the door. Grace must've been pretty upset after the disaster with the broom. Which way had she gone? I grabbed my bike, and Colette got on Maman's. We pedaled down Rue du Four, calling Grace's name. There were gobs of tourists on the sidewalk, and so much traffic noise that I didn't know how Grace would be able to hear us calling her. We passed the bank, the pharmacy, the shoe store. Could she have gone into one of them? There was no sign of her.

After a few blocks, I stopped to catch my breath. Colette wheeled up beside me.

"What are we going to do?" I said, worried. "She could have gone anywhere!"

"Let's try that direction," said Colette.

We took Rue des Canettes toward St. Sulpice Church. On the narrow side street there was much less traffic, but also hardly any people.

"Grace!" I called, panic creeping into my voice.

I saw a gray cat dart under a parked car and heard a familiar yap. It was *la petite chienne*, the little stray dog that Grace and I had seen in the Luxembourg Gardens. She'd been hanging around the bakery lately, and Grace was always on the lookout for her. Maybe it was a sign that Colette and I were on the right track! I pedaled harder.

We reached Place St. Sulpice, and Colette began to bike slowly down one side of the plaza. The outdoor tables at the corner café were packed. I got off my bike and wiped the sweat from my forehead. Gathering my courage, I approached a lady sitting at one of the tables.

"*Excusez-moi, madame,*" I said nervously. "*Avez-vous vu une petite fille de neuf ans?*"

She looked at me blankly. “I’m sorry, I don’t speak French,” she said in English.

Oh, no. Not only had I just spoken to a complete stranger, but now I had to repeat it in English! My shoulders bunched up, and blood rushed to my face. I *had* to find Grace, and that meant I had to speak English, no matter how hard it was.

I thought for a moment. “Did you see…a girl…nine years old?” I stammered.

“Maybe,” she said. “What does she look like?”

“Maybe” was better than “no.” But could I describe Grace in English? I concentrated, and the words tumbled out. “Her hair is…brown,” I said. The woman nodded. Encouraged, I added, “It is…long. She is this high.” I held up my hand to show the woman how tall Grace was.

“I think I did see a girl like that,” she said, pointing. “By the fountain over there.”

“*Merci!*” I said. “*Merci beaucoup!*” I shook the woman’s hand, pumping it up and down. “Thank you very much!”

Maman was right—I *did* know more English than I realized. Now if only the woman was talking about the right girl! I jumped back on my bike. *Let it be Grace, let it be Grace*, I chanted to myself, pedaling toward the huge stone fountain in the middle of the plaza.

As I rounded the fountain, I saw my cousin standing in front of one of the fierce lion sculptures. “Grace!” I called.

“Oh! Sylvie!” Grace ran toward me.

I rolled to a stop and held out my arms. “We could not find you,” I said. “Colette! Over here!”

A stream of English poured from Grace’s mouth, and she started to cry. Colette wheeled up and handed her a tissue.

“I’m sorry,” Grace said over and over.

“Do not feel bad,” I said, patting her on the back. I was so relieved to find her that the words came out in English without my even thinking. “We are here now.”

“I know,” she said, sniffling. “Thank you. I couldn’t figure out…I followed the little dog…”

“It is okay,” I said, giving her a hug. “We go back now. Try again.” I wanted her to know she was still welcome in the bakery. Everyone makes

mistakes.

The three of us headed back to the shop, Colette and I walking our bicycles. Maman, Papa, and Aunt Karen were waiting in front with worried looks on their faces. When they saw us, everyone started talking at once. The grown-ups hugged Grace and praised Colette and me.

"Sylvie, thank you for finding Grace," said Aunt Karen.

"We're proud of you," said Papa, tucking a curl behind my ear.

I felt a warm glow in my chest. "*Merci*, Papa," I said. "Thank you," I repeated in English. It was so good to be home.

That night after dinner, Grace announced she was going to bed early and went to my room. She'd had a hard day.

I wanted to cheer her up. I wondered if she would like company or if she would prefer to be left alone. I decided on company.

I made some tea and put two cups on a tray, along with two *truffes au chocolat*. The chocolate truffle candies were orange-and-thyme-flavored—the best! Then I knocked gently on my own door, which felt weird.

"Grace, you like?" I said in English.

She looked happy to see me. I was glad I'd brought two cups of tea. "Please, I sit?" I said.

Grace nodded. "*Oui!*"

We drank the tea and ate the chocolates sitting on her mattress. This time the silence between us didn't feel so awkward. It felt like a quiet tea party.

When we finished the tea, I had an idea. "You help?" I said, holding up a magazine and scissors and pointing to the decorations on the wall.

"*Oui!*" she said. "*Je toi aide.*"

I looked at her sympathetically. She had said "I you help." Speaking a foreign language is complicated. "*Je vais t'aider,*" I corrected her gently. "I *will* help you."

"*Je vais t'aider,*" she repeated, smiling.

I fetched an extra pair of scissors from the kitchen, and together we cut out pictures of animals—dogs for Grace, cats for me. Grace cut very

carefully and precisely. I liked the pictures she chose. After a while Napoléon wandered in, and I started to hum. I didn't even know I was humming. It happens to me all the time.

Suddenly Grace began to sing. "Twinkle, twinkle little star…"

I looked up in surprise. "*C'est la même chanson!*" I said. "It is the same song!"

Grace grinned. "It's also the alphabet song," she said. "A, B, C, D, E, F, G—"

Just then, Napoléon meowed. He wanted to sing with Grace! We laughed. He meowed again. Grace and I had *une crise de fou rire*, a giggle fit. We couldn't stop.

When we finally caught our breath, Grace picked up her cell phone and showed me some of her pictures. There were the Luxembourg Gardens and *la petite chienne*, baby Lily, and lots and lots of photos of her friends and family back home, including her father—my Uncle Matt—our grandparents, and her brother, Josh. I realized she must still be feeling homesick.

"You like having brother?" I asked slowly in English.

"Yes," she said, "But…" She paused, searching for the right words in French. "*Je voudrais…*sister," she said, pointing to a photo of Lily.

"*Une soeur*," I said. She wanted a sister. "Baby sisters make a lot of noise," I reminded her, miming a crying baby. "Wah! Wah!"

Grace laughed. "A big brother can be bossy," she said.

"Bossy?" I didn't know that word.

"They say, 'Grace, do this. Grace, do that.'"

"Ah! Bossy. I understand."

"But still…" she said and paused a moment. "*J'aime…mon…frère*. I love my brother."

"*J'aime ma soeur,*" I said.

Scrolling through the pictures of Grace, Josh, Aunt Karen, and Uncle Matt, I saw how much Grace's parents loved both their children. Before baby Lily arrived, I'd worried that my parents wouldn't have enough love for more than one child at a time. Now I realized that as a family grows, the love grows, too. After all, I loved Papa, and when he met and married Maman, I came to love her. And now we all loved Lily. She was part of our family.

Napoléon meowed again, which brought back our giggles. As Grace snapped a selfie of the two of us, Napoléon snuck into the picture, and we laughed even harder. I was bubbling with happiness as we got ready for bed. It was such a relief to finally be able to talk to my cousin.

Cousins and Friends

Chapter 7

A few days later, Grace asked to work in the bakery again. She promised not to make a mess. I thought it was brave of her to return to the kitchen, and I was glad that Papa said yes.

When she came in, I handed her an apron.

"I am happy you are back," I said clearly in English. I'd been practicing.

"*Moi aussi,*" she said in French. "*Qu'est-ce que je peux faire?*" It sounded like she'd been practicing too. She wanted to know what she could do.

"Dishes," said Colette and Papa at the same time, pointing to the sink.

Grace cheerfully set to work. Papa took a batch of *madeleines* out of the oven while Colette and I piped hazelnut cream onto rings of puff pastry. I had to pay close attention to get it right. I couldn't let myself get distracted by the delicious smells that were floating through the kitchen—vanilla, lemon zest, and melted butter.

When Grace was done with the dishes, she asked Colette what to do next.

"We're making *crème brûlée*," said Colette. "You can help."

The creamy custard required lots of egg yolks. Colette taught Grace how to separate eggs using one hand. She cracked an egg and twisted her fingers just so, letting the egg white slip into a bowl. Then she plopped the yolk into another bowl. For most people it takes a lot of practice, but Grace got the hang of it right away.

As I finished putting together rings of puff pastry and buttercream, Colette showed Grace how to make whipped cream with a whisk. Then Grace got her first lesson in using a piping bag, practicing on some *éclairs*.

Afterward I showed her how to make whipped-cream rosettes. She was a natural!

By the time we were done, the *crèmes brûlées* had baked and cooled, and we got to watch the best part: one of the bakers caramelizing the sugar on top with a blowtorch. I loved the way the blue flame danced over the sugar, melting and browning it into a crackled crust.

Then Maman and Aunt Karen came into the shop with baby Lily. Her first visit to the bakery, and still so tiny! She was wide awake and looked adorable in her red, white, and green striped outfit. The bakers came out of the kitchen, and Colette, Grace, and I gathered round to say hello. Lily gazed at us with her big round eyes.

"*D'accord*, back to work," Papa said after a while, and the bakers returned to their stations.

"Can I hold her, Maman?" I asked.

"Of course," she said, "but you have to sit down." She motioned to one of the tables.

Grace and I washed our hands and sat down. Maman put Lily in my lap, reminding me to support her head.

"*Bonjour*, Lily," I said. "*Ça va bien?* Is everything good?"

She pursed her little lips. I knew she couldn't understand my words, but we were still able to communicate.

I pointed to the display case. "Look at all the different pastries and desserts. Aren't they pretty? That's a chocolate *opéra*, the one with the puff pastry is a St. Honoré, and the green one is a *tarte au citron vert*. I sprinkled the lime zest on top myself. The big dish, that's a cherry *clafoutis*. And this one," I said, pointing to an *éclair*, "*this* one was made by Grace. She's really good at pastry-making. She's *notre cousine et amie*. Our cousin and friend."

"Thank you," said Grace after Maman translated what I'd said.

"Someday," I said to Lily, "I'll teach you how to make pastries."

Papa came out from behind the counter and put his arms around me.

"Thanks for your help in the kitchen," he said. "I'm sorry I've been so distracted. I really do appreciate everything you've been doing. You're my special girl. *Mon rayon de soleil*."

I beamed.

He turned to Grace. “You know, both of you show a lot of promise,” he said, first in French, then in English. “Baking talent must run in this family.”

“Thank you, Uncle Bernard,” said Grace. “Let me take a family picture.”

She whipped out her cell phone, and Papa and Maman stood behind me and Lily.

Click!

“Would you like me to take a picture of all of you together?” asked Colette.

“*Oui!*” Grace and I said at the same instant, which made us both laugh.

Grace handed the phone to Colette and pulled her chair next to mine. Aunt Karen crowded in behind. The cell phone clicked.

“What a happy family,” Colette said, handing Grace her phone.

Grace and I huddled over the phone to check out the picture, and I saw that it was indeed a happy family. Just a bigger one.

About the Author

Susanna Reich is an award-winning author of fiction and nonfiction for children and young adults, including *Minette's Feast: The Delicious Story of Julia Child and Her Cat; José! Born to Dance; Penelope Bailey Takes the Stage;* and the forthcoming *Fab Four Friends: The Boys Who Became the Beatles*. Among her honors are the Tomás Rivera Award, International Latino Book Award, Orbis Pictus Honor, ALA Notable, and ALA Best Books for Young Adults. A self-described "foodie," Susanna loves to cook, bake, and experiment with new recipes. She lives in New York's Hudson Valley with her husband, children's book author Gary Golio. Visit her at www.susannareich.com.

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Glossary of French Words

arrondissement *(ah-rohn-deess-mahn)*—neighborhood or district

Au revoir, petite chienne! *(oh ruh-vwar puh-teet shyen)*—Good-bye, little dog!

Avez-vous vu une petite fille de neuf ans? *(ah-veh voo vyew ewn puh-teet feey duh noof ahn)*—Have you seen a nine-year-old girl?

baguette *(bah-get)*—a long, thin loaf of French bread

Bienvenue à Paris! *(byehn-veh-nyew ah pah-ree)*—Welcome to Paris!

bonbon au chocolat *(bohn-bohn oh sho-ko-lah)*—candy with a soft center and a chocolate outer shell

bonjour *(bohn-zhoor)*—hello

brioche *(bree-ohsh)*—a light, slightly sweet bun

Ça va bien? *(sah vah byehn)*—Is everything going well?

C'est dommage *(say doh-mahzh)*—It's a pity

C'est la même chanson! *(say lah mem shahn-sohn)*—It's the same song!

cherchez *(shayr-shay)*—to look for

chèvre *(shev-ruh)*—cheese made from goat's milk

chocolat au coeur coulant *(sho-ko-lah oh kur koo-lahn)*—a rich chocolate cake with a liquid chocolate center

clafoutis *(klah-foo-tee)*—a dessert made with cherries

crème brûlée *(krem broo-lay)*—a custard dessert with a crisp caramelized top

crème caramel *(krem kah-rah-mel)*—a custard dessert topped with a layer of soft caramel

crème chantilly *(krem shahn-tee-yee)*—sweetened whipped cream

croissant *(kwa-sahn)*—a flaky crescent-shaped roll

d'accord *(dah-kohr)*—Okay; all right

de l'histoire *(duh lee-stwar)*—of history, historical

éclair *(ay-klehr)*—a long pastry filled with custard cream, often topped with chocolate

Elle est sortie *(el ay sor-tee)*—She went outside

euro *(ooh-roh)*—European money

Excusez-moi, madame. *(ek-skew-zay-mwah mah-dahm)*—Excuse me, ma'am.

formidable *(for-mee-dah-bluh)*—wonderful

gâteau à la rhubarbe *(gah-toh ah lah rew-barb)*—rhubarb cake

gâteau aux amandes *(gah-toh ohz ah-mahnd)*—almond sponge cake

grand-mère *(grahn-mehr)*—grandmother

J'aime ma soeur *(zhem mah suhr)*—I love my sister

J'aime mon frère *(zhem mohn frehr)*—I love my brother

Je l'ai senti *(zhuh lay sahn-tee)*—I felt it

Je t'en prie *(zhuh tehn pree)*—You're welcome

Je vais t'aider *(zhuh vay teh-day)*—I will help you

je voudrais *(zhuh voo-dray)*—I would like

La Croix Rouge *(lah kwah roozh)*—The Red Cross, a charitable organization

le bébé *(luh bay-bay)*—baby

les jardins du Luxembourg *(lay zhahr-dehn dyew lewks-emboorg)*—Luxembourg Gardens, one of the largest public parks in Paris

Liberté, Egalité, Cousinage! *(lee-bayr-tay ay-gah-lee-tay koo-zee-nahzh)*—Freedom, Equality, Cousinhood!

Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité! *(lee-bayr-tay ay-gah-lee-tay frahtehr-nee-tay)*—Freedom, Equality, Brotherhood!

macaron *(mah-kah-rohn)*—a double-layer round cookie that comes in all kinds of colors and flavors

ma chérie *(mah shay-ree)*—my dear

madame *(mah-dahm)*—ma'am, Mrs.

madeleine *(mahd-lehn)*—a small, rich cake baked in a shell-shaped mold

Mais oui *(meh wee)*—Yes, of course

maman *(mah-mahn)*—mother, mama

merci *(mehr-see)*—thank you

merci beaucoup *(mehr-see boh-koo)*—thank you very much

meringue *(muh-rehng)*—a light mixture of egg whites and sugar that is baked and used to top pies and cakes

millefeuille *(meel-foy)*—a layered pastry with a glazed top of swirled chocolate and vanilla icing

moi aussi *(mwah oh-see)*—me too

mon école *(mohn ay-kohl)*—my school

mon petit chou *(mohn puh-tee shoo)*—my little cabbage (used as a term of endearment that means "my dear or "my darling")

mon petit rayon de soleil *(mohn puh-tee reh-yohn duh solay)*—my little ray of sunshine

Mont Blanc *(mohn blahn)*—a dessert of puréed, sweetened chestnuts topped with whipped cream

non *(nohn)*—no

Non, merci *(nohn mehr-see)*—No, thank you

notre cousine et amie *(no-truh koo-zeen ay ah-mee)*—our cousin and friend

opéra *(ooh-pay-rah)*—almond sponge cake with coffee and chocolate filling and icing

oui *(wee)*—yes

pain au chocolat *(pen oh shoh-koh-lah)*—a chocolate croissant

parfum supplementaire *(par-fahm soo-pleh-mahn-tayr)*—extra fragrance

Parlez-vous anglais? *(pahr-lay vooz ahn-gleh*)—Do you speak English?

pâtisserie *(pah-tee-suh-ree)*—a French bakery that specializes in pastries and desserts

petite chienne *(puh-teet shyen)*—little dog (female)

pourpre *(poor-pruh)*—purple

Puis-je vous aider? *(pwee-zhuh vooz ay-day)*—May I help you?

Qu'est-ce que je peux faire? *(kes kuh juh puh fayr)*—What can I do?

s'il te plaît *(seel tuh pleh)*—please (used when speaking to somone you know)

St. Honoré *(sant oh-no-ray)*—a classic French cake made with rich pastry, custard cream, caramel-glazed cream puffs, and sweetened whipped cream.

tarte *(tahrt)*—a pastry shell filled with fruit or custard

tarte au citron vert *(tahrt oh see-trohn vayr)*—a pastry shell filled with lime custard

tarte Tatin *(tahrt tah-tahn)*—apple upside-down cake

toi aussi *(twah oh-see)*—you too

tout de suite *(toot sweet)*—right away

truffes au chocolat *(troof oh sho-ko-lah)*—a soft chocolate candy covered with cocoa or chopped nuts

une crème *(ewn krem)*—a sweet

une crise de fou rire *(ewn kreez duh foo reer)*—a fit of giggles

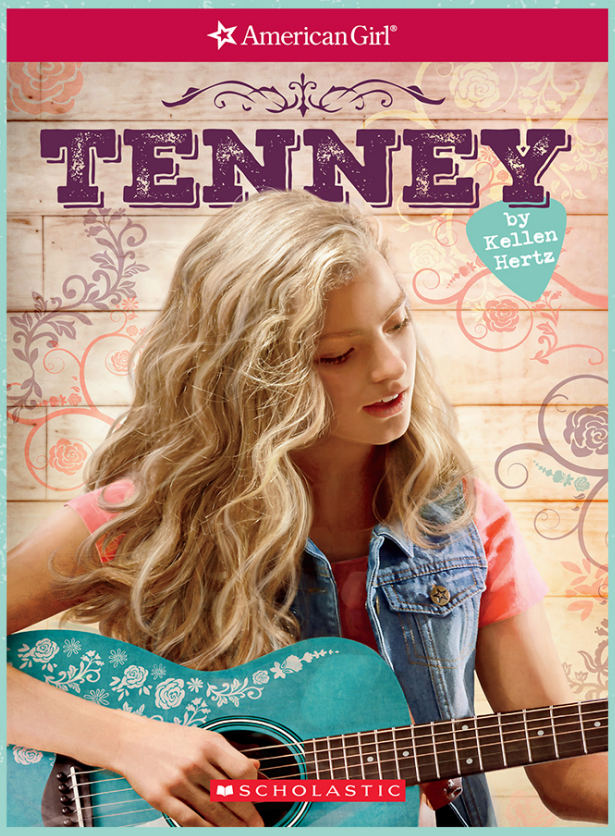
une soeur *(ewn suhr)*—a sister

Une minute. *(ewn mee-nyewt)*—Just a minute.

MEET TENNEY GRANT!

Her biggest dream is to *share what's in her heart through music.*

Turn the page to read an excerpt from Tenney's first book!



LOST IN THE MUSIC

Chapter 1

My left hand shifted down the neck of my guitar, fingers pressing into the frets to form chords, while my right hand sailed over the strings with my favorite pick. I knew every note of "April Springs." I didn't have to look at my sheet music or think about how to play the song. I just let go and played, feeling the music as if it was flowing out of my heart.

Out of the corner of my eye, I caught Dad waving me down from a few feet away.

Startled, I clamped my hand over my guitar's neck, muting its sound mid-chord. It took me a moment to realize I didn't hear the buzzy twang of Dad's bass guitar. I glanced around. The rest of our band wasn't playing, either.

"Sorry," I said, feeling my cheeks turn hot pink.

"No worries," Dad said, winking. "I know you love that one. And you were singing with so much heart that it nearly broke mine to stop you."

I blushed. When I play a song I love, it's easy for me to get swept up and forget about everything but the music. "April Springs" has a slow, sad melody that fills me with warmth every time we rehearse it. And when I sing its romantic lyrics, I can't help daydreaming about what the songwriter must have been feeling when she composed them.

"That transition out of the chorus still sounds a bit rocky," Dad said to the band. "Let's try it again."

Our lead singer, Jesse, wrinkled her nose at him. “Come on, Ray. This is the fifth time we’ve gone over the chorus. Let’s just move on to the next song.”

My seventeen-year-old brother, Mason, rolled his eyes from behind his drum kit. Mason isn’t Jesse’s biggest fan. He thinks she’s stuck-up because she never helps unpack gear at our shows. Also, she only drinks bottled water from France, even though the tap water is perfectly fine here in Nashville, Tennessee. Despite all that, I couldn’t help but admire her. Jesse definitely had what it took to be a lead singer for a band. She had a great voice, she loved performing, and she was happiest when she was the center of attention. Every time I watched her perform I wondered: *Could that be me someday?*

“Let’s try the chorus *once* more,” Dad replied calmly. “We haven’t practiced in ages. And with our next show around the corner, I want to make sure we have this down.”

Jesse pouted, but she knew she couldn’t say no because the Tri-Stars were Dad’s band.

The Tri-Stars used to be a family band. But when Mom quit to start her own food truck business, Dad invited Jesse to join us as the lead singer. I wish we got to perform at the big stages around Nashville, like the Ryman Auditorium or the Grand Ole Opry, but we mostly just play weekend gigs around our neighborhood. Even so, we have a few fans—that is, if you count my little sister and my best friend.

Jesse sighed. “Let’s get on with it, then.” She counted off, and the four of us launched into “April Springs” again.

“*Last April the rains came down,*” sang Jesse, “*and washed away your love.”*

Dad and I joined in, harmonizing on the next lines. *“Last April the rains came down, and washed away my pride. When I lost your heart in that rainstorm, I think I nearly died.”*

Jesse pushed her microphone away and looked over her shoulder at me.

“Tennyson, your vocals need to blend more,” she hissed.

Jesse always uses my full name when she bosses me around. Usually I like having a unique name, but the way Jesse says it always makes my temper rise into my throat.

“I’m doing my best,” I said to her.

I like singing harmony, but when I'm singing low notes, my voice loses some of its smoothness and gets a grainy edge. Mom says that's what makes my voice unique. When you're singing backup, though, you're not supposed to sound unique; you're supposed to sound *invisible*.

"It's boiling in here," Jesse said curtly. "I need a break." Without waiting for my dad's reaction, she stepped off the edge of the stage and slipped out the front door.

Dad frowned. "I'll go turn up the AC," he said, heading to the storeroom at the back of the shop where we rehearse.

I sighed. We never seemed to be able to get through an entire rehearsal without Jesse getting upset—and this time it was my fault.

Mason slung an arm around my shoulders. "Don't let Jesse get to you," he said. "She's not happy unless she's complaining about something. I thought you sounded great. Didn't she, Waylon?"

Waylon, our golden retriever, perked up. He's named after one of Dad's favorite singers, the "outlaw" Waylon Jennings, and he definitely lived up to the name when he was a puppy. He always used to break the rules, like escaping from the backyard and chewing up our shoes.

"Maybe the Tri-Stars should try playing some of your songs," Mason suggested, nudging me with his drumstick. "Remember that one you wrote about Waylon? *Oh, Waylon. Wayyy-lon! He's a real sweet pooch… "* he crooned.

I sang the next line. "*Long as you make sure he's not on the loose… "*

"Wayyy-lon," we harmonized. Waylon howled along.

I laughed. "I don't think those lyrics are ready for an audience yet."

"C'mon, it's a good song!" Mason said.

"It's just okay," I said.

I'm twelve now, but I've been writing songs since I was ten. "Waylon's Song" was the first one I ever shared with my family. I was really proud of it back then. Now, though, the words seemed sort of cheesy.

"I've gotten better since I wrote that one," I said.

"Yeah?" Mason said. "You should play me something."

I hesitated. I'd been working on a few songs lately, but none of them were quite ready for anyone's ears but mine.

"I need to finish some lyrics first," I said.

"Suit yourself. Want to help me catch up on inventory while we wait for Jesse?"

We always hold Tri-Star rehearsals at my dad's music shop, Grant's Music and Collectibles. My parents have owned the store since I was little, so for me, it's the next best thing to home. Mason and I don't officially work there, but we all help out when we can.

I followed Mason into the storeroom. It's packed with shipping boxes and instruments that need repairing. Dad was at his desk, writing *Trash* on a piece of paper that he had taped to a sagging black amplifier.

"Wow!" Mason said. "Is that a Skyrocket 3000?"

Dad nodded. "A guy dropped it off for recycling yesterday. Apparently it's broken."

"No *way*," said Mason.

"You want it?" Dad asked.

Mason nodded eagerly, his eyes so wide that you'd think he'd just won a free car. My brother loves rewiring musical gear. Our garage is full of half-fixed amplifiers and soundboards that he's determined to repair.

"Great, we'll bring it home to the workshop after rehearsal," Dad said.

Mason craned his neck to peek out the window. "I'm not sure we're getting back to rehearsal any time soon," he said. "Jesse's still on the phone."

I groaned.

Dad gave my shoulder a little squeeze. "Tenney, I know you're excited to practice, but Jesse's got a lot of solo shows coming up and she's a little stressed out. So let's just give her another few minutes here."

I knew Jesse was busy, but it was hard to be patient. I'd been looking forward to band rehearsal all week. If I could, I'd play music every waking minute.

"Fine," I said after a moment. "I'll go work on some of my own songs."

"Good idea," Dad said, ruffling my hair.

I ducked out of the storeroom and returned to the small stage at the front of the store. Dad lets customers use the stage to test out microphones, amplifiers, and instruments, and it doubles as the Tri-Stars' rehearsal space. I slung my guitar over my shoulder and adjusted Jesse's microphone to my height, looking out at the empty store. Waylon was curled up by the vintage cash register, watching me. For a moment, I imagined myself on a real stage, in front of thousands of people, about to perform a song I'd written.

"This next one goes out to Waylon," I said into the microphone.

I picked out the chords of the tune I'd been working on. Melody comes easy to me, but it takes me a long time to find the right lyrics to match. I hadn't figured out words to this song yet, so I just hummed the melody while I played. As the song's energy rose and washed over me, I filled the empty room with music.

The song ended and I opened my eyes. Waylon was asleep, which made me laugh. Jesse was still on the phone outside. Everything looked the same, but somehow I felt stronger inside. Playing music always made me feel like that. But performing my *own* songs for people, letting them feel what I felt through the music—*that* was my biggest dream.

Jesse came through the door and tucked her cell phone into her pocket. "Okay," she said. "Go get your dad and brother, and let's get this rehearsal over with."

I snarled and let my fingers ripple down my guitar's six strings, sending up a wave of notes. *Jesse doesn't know how good she has it singing lead,* I thought. I hopped off the stage and headed toward the storeroom. *Maybe I should ask Dad to let me perform one of my songs with the Tri-Stars,* I thought. But I knew that he'd only agree if he thought the song was *great*. And that meant not playing it for him until I was sure it was ready.

HOT CHICKEN & BRIGHT LIGHTS

Chapter 2

We wrapped up rehearsal and drove home. When we pulled up, my seven-year-old sister, Aubrey, welcomed us by doing cartwheels on the lawn in front of Mom's food truck. I love Mom's truck. It has shiny silver bumpers and it's painted robin's-egg blue. Georgia's Genuine Tennessee Hot Chicken is painted in scrolling tomato-red letters along the side.

Mom appeared from the open garage, her carrot-colored hair twisted up under a bandanna, and her freckly arms moving fast as she loaded food bins into the truck's tiny kitchen. She reminded me of a hummingbird: always in motion and stronger than she looks.

"Finally!" Mom said, as we hopped out of Dad's pickup truck. "We were starting to get worried about y'all. How was rehearsal?"

"Okay," I said. "But we only rehearsed three songs."

Mom raised an eyebrow. As the former lead singer of the Tri-Stars, she knew that being in a band is always full of drama. "What happened?" she asked.

"Jesse happened," said Mason.

"We sounded good, though," Dad chimed in. Aubrey cartwheeled over to us, her sparkly tutu bouncing as she landed with a thud on the grass. "When do I get to play with the Tri-Stars?" she asked.

"Soon, baby," Dad said.

Aubrey pouted. Everyone in my family plays an instrument, but Dad is the one who decides when we're ready to perform with the band. Dad plays anything with strings. Mom sings and plays Autoharp, Mason plays mandolin and drums, and Aubrey's learning accordion. I've played guitar

since I was four, and I started banjo last year. Dad always says that as members of the Grant family, we have music in our bones.

Mom rubbed Aubrey's shoulder. "Just keep practicing. Nobody ever won a Country Music Award by doing cartwheels onstage." She checked her watch and nodded at my guitar case. "Better get that inside, Tenney. We're wheels up in ten minutes," she said. "We need to be set up by six o'clock."

We were about to take the truck downtown to sell Mom's food at Centennial Park. Aubrey's favorite singer, Belle Starr, would be performing an outdoor concert there. I wasn't a huge fan, but I'd never turn down a chance to hear live music.

I ran into our family room with its red patchwork rug, jumble of antique furniture, and musical instruments everywhere. I set my guitar next to a couple of Dad's and raced upstairs to the bedroom I share with Aubrey. You can definitely tell whose side is whose. Aubrey's half looks like a glitter factory exploded. My side's less shimmery, and decorated with all things music. I've adorned the wall over my bed with old photos of Patsy Cline, Joan Baez, and Johnny Cash, and a framed 78 rpm record of one of my favorite songs, Elvis Presley singing "Hound Dog." My guitar pick collection sits in a glass jar on my nightstand.

As I sat down to change shoes, I saw my most prized possession: my songwriting journal. The cover was decorated with rosebuds and blooms, and I'd covered its pages with lyrics, song ideas, and doodles. With my new melody still stuck in my head, I was tempted to crack open the journal to work out some lyrics. Before I could, though, Mom honked from the driveway. I hopped up with a sigh. Writing my song would have to wait.

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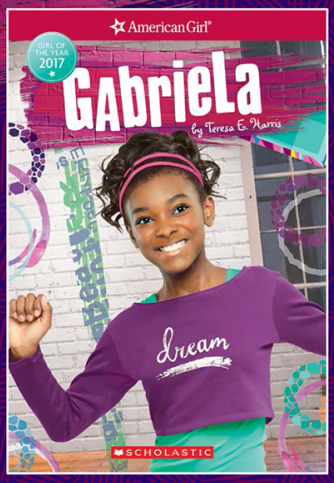

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